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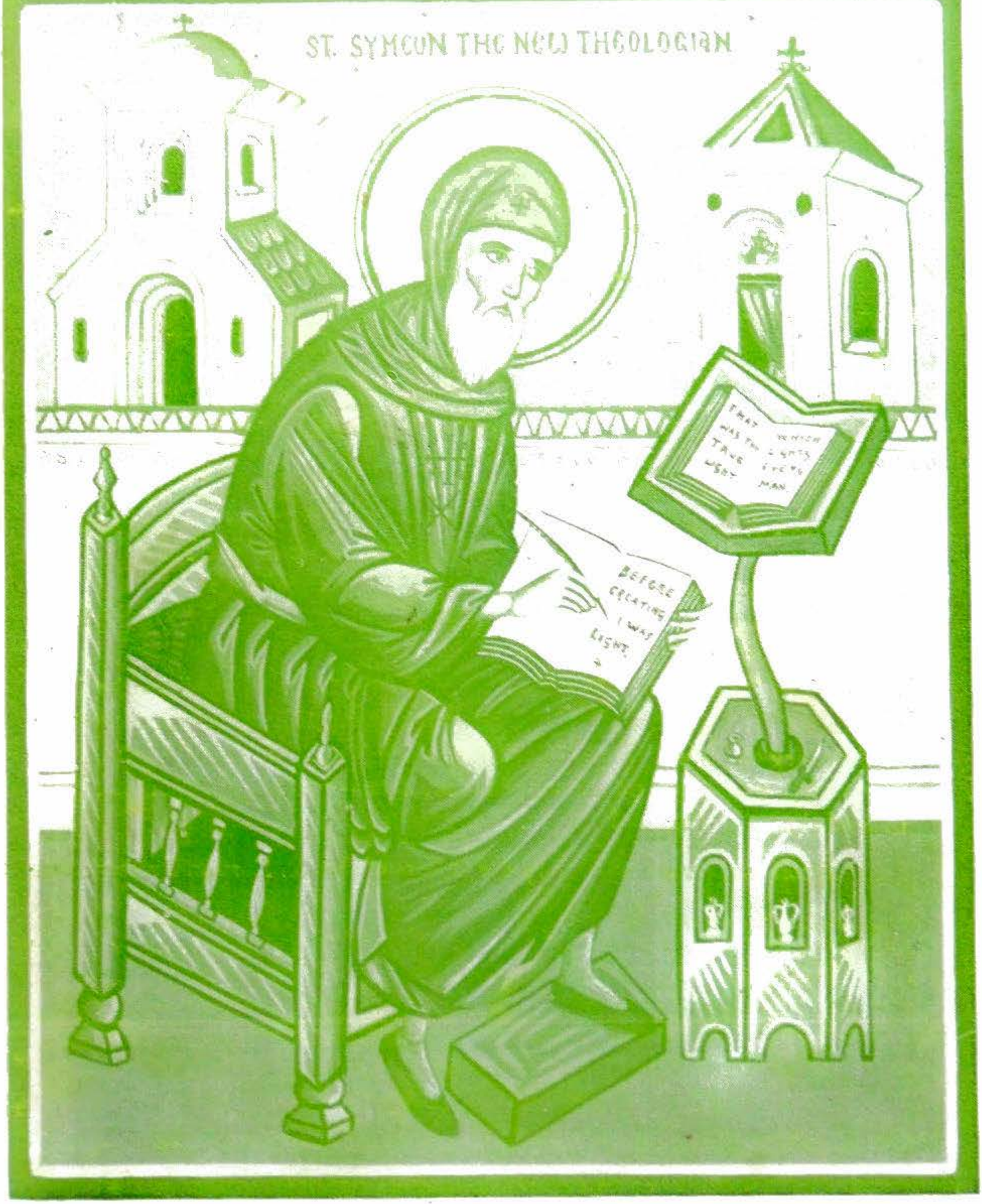

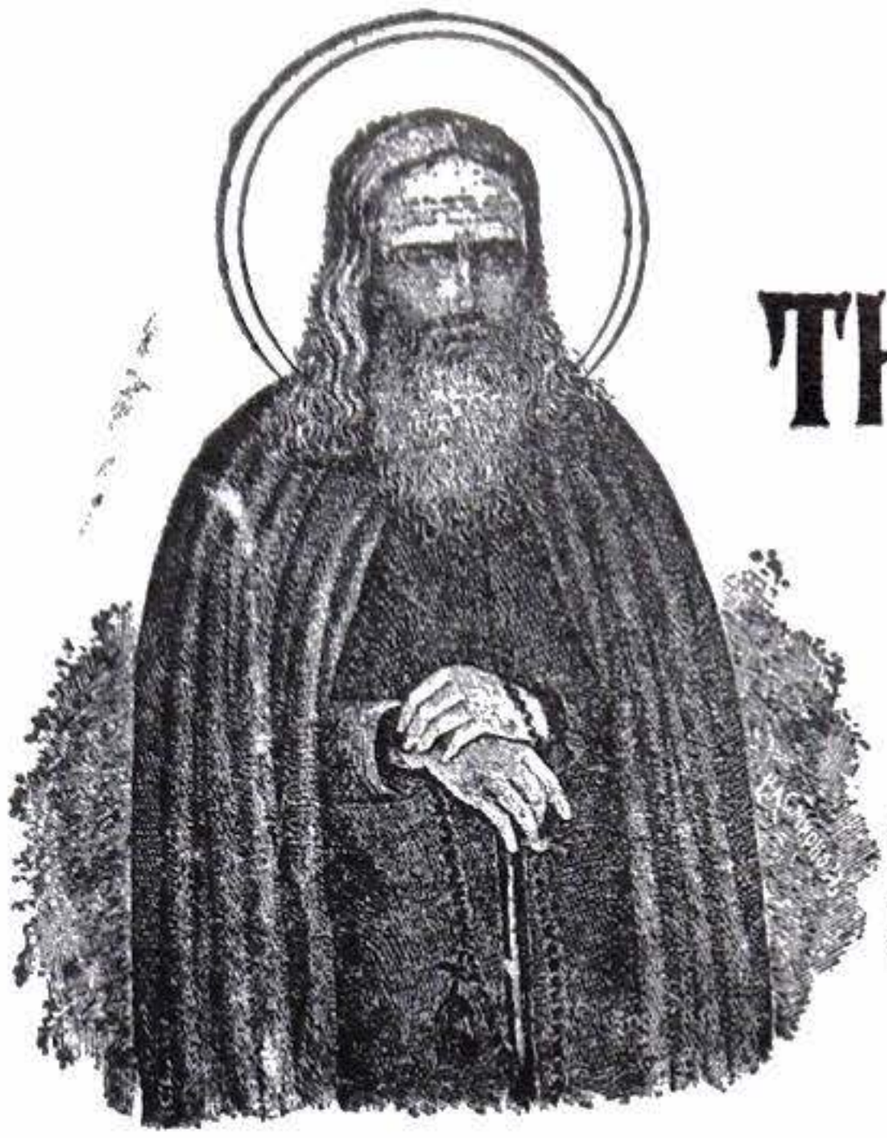

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The Life of the Fathers

Vita Patrum

OR

A BOOK OF THE LIFE OF CERTAIN BLESSED ONES

By St. Gregory of Tours

THE PROLOGUE OF SAINT GREGORY

I HAD RESOLVED to write only of what has been divinely accomplished at the tombs of the blessed martyrs and confessors; but as I have recently found out certain things about those men whom the merit of their blessed sojourn here below has elevated to heaven, and as I thought that their mode of life, which is known from some accounts, could edify the Church, I do not wish — since the opportunity presents itself — to put off recounting something about them, for the reason that the life of the saints not only makes known their resolve, but also incites the souls of the hearers to imitation.

There are those who ask whether we should speak of the *life* of the saints or of their *lives*. Agellius* and several other philosophers wished to speak of the *lives*. But the author Pliny**, in the third book of his *Art of Grammar,* expresses himself thus: "The ancients spoke of the *lives* of each of us; but the grammarians do not believe that the word *life* has a plural." Therefore, it is manifestly better to say the *Life of the Fathers* rather than the *Lives of the Fathers,* because although there is a diversity of merits and virtues among them, nevertheless one life of the body sustains them all in this world.

I have written, to be sure, in my book on the Confessors, some brief details of what certain ones have done while in the body, even though things great by the power of God are thus rendered small by the writing. Now, in this work, which we wish to call the *Life* of the Saints, we presume, despite

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*Aulus Gellius, 2nd-century writer and grammarian (rather than "philosopher," a term St. Gregory uses in a very broad sense), author of *Noctes Atticae,* "*Attic Nights.*"

**Pliny the Elder, 1st century, author of *Natural History.*

SAINT GREGORY OF TOURS

our inexperience and ignorance, to speak of such matters at greater length, entreating the Lord that He, Who has often opened the mouth of the dumb for its original use, might vouchsafe to give the word to our mouth, so that from my lips there might flow salutary things for my hearers and readers, things worthy of the holy Fathers. And those things which He inspires to be written about the Saints, may He regard as chanted to His praise.

VITA PATRUM

THE LIFE OF

Saint Salvius

SEER OF HEAVENLY MYSTERIES

In addition to the twenty chapters of the Life of the Fathers, *the writing of St. Gregory contain several other substantial Lives of 6th-century saints of Gaul. These will be presented as an appendix to the complete text of the* Life of the Fathers.

The first of these Lives is of a saint personally well-known to St. Gregory: St. Salvius, Bishop of Albi. His Life, contained in the History of the Franks *(Book VII, 1 and V, 50), affords one of the classic examples in Christian literature of a saint who beheld heaven itself and returned to tell of it; it may well be placed beside such Eastern Lives as that of St. Andrew the Fool for Christ of Constantinople.*

THE FEELING OF REVERENCE which I have for him compels me to say something about St. Salvius. He often used to tell how, during his years as a layman, while he was occupying himself with worldly affairs he never permitted himself to be ensnared by the carnal desires which so frequently fill the minds of young people. When the Holy Spirit finally found a place in his heart, he gave up the struggle of worldly existence and entered a monastery. As one now consecrated to Almighty God, he understood that it was better to serve the Lord in poverty and to humble oneself before Him, rather than to strive after the wealth of this transient world. He spent many years in his monastery and observed the rule instituted by the Fathers.

When the time came for the abbot of this monastery to die, Salvius took over the charge of feeding the flock, for he had by then reached the fullness of his physical and intellectual powers. Once he had been given this appointment, it was his duty to be more with the brethren, in order to maintain discipline; but instead he became even more withdrawn, and chose for himself a cell which was still more remote. Once he was elected abbot, he lived just as ascetically as before, devoting all his time to reading and prayer. He was persuaded that it was more fitting for him to remain secluded among his

monks, than to appear in public and be addressed as abbot. Being thus persuaded, he bade farewell to the monks. He became a recluse, and in the solitude of his cell he subjected himself to even greater abstinence than before. At the same time he took good care to observe the law of Christian charity, offering up prayers for all who came to visit the monastery, and giving them the bread of offering with abundant grace. Again and again those who came with grave afflictions went away healed.

One day when Salvius lay in bed, gasping for breath and weakened by a high fever, his cell was suddenly filled with a bright light and the walls seemed to shake. He stretched out his hands to heaven, and as he gave thanks he breathed forth his spirit. The monks, together with his own mother carried his dead body out of the cell with lamentation; then they washed it, vested it and placed it upon a bier. They passed the long night in weeping and singing psalms.

When morning came and all was ready for the funeral, the corpse began to move on the bier. Salvius' cheeks became flushed, he stirred himself as if awakened from a deep sleep, opened his eyes, raised his hands and spoke: "Oh merciful Lord, why hast Thou done this to me? Why hast Thou decreed that I should return to this dark place where we dwell on earth? I would have been much happier in Thy compassion on high, rather than having to begin once again my profitless life here below." Those around him were in perplexity. When they asked him the meaning of the miracle which had occurred, he gave no reply. He rose from the bier, feeling no ill effects from the illness which he had suffered, and for three days he remained without food or drink.

On the third day he called the monks, together with his mother. "My most dear friends," he said, "hear what I am about to say. You must understand that all you see in this world is entirely without value. *All is vanity,* exactly as the prophet Solomon proclaimed. Blessed is he who behaves in such a way in this earthly existence that he is rewarded by beholding God in His glory in heaven."

As he said this, he wondered whether he should say more or stop with this. He was silent for a while, but the monks begged him to tell them what he had seen. "When my cell shook four days ago," he continued, "and you saw me lying dead, I was raised up by two angels and carried to the highest peak of heaven, until I seemed to have beneath my feet not only this miserable earth, but also the sun and moon, the clouds and stars. Then I was conducted through a gate that shone more brightly than the light of the sun and entered a building where the whole floor shone with gold and silver. The light was impossible to describe. The place was filled with a multitude of people,

neither male nor female, stretching so far in all directions that one could not see where it ended. The angels made a way for me through the crowd of people in front of me, and we came to the place towards which our gaze had been directed even when we had been far away. Over this place there hung a cloud more brilliant than any light, and yet no sun or moon or star could be seen; indeed, the cloud shone more brightly than any of these with its own brilliance. A voice came out of the cloud, as the voice of many waters. Sinner that I am, I was greeted with great respect by a number of beings, some dressed in priestly vestments and others in ordinary dress; my guides told me that these were the martyrs and other holy men whom we honor here on earth and to whom we pray with great devotion. As I stood here there was wafted over me a fragrance of such sweetness that, nourished by it, I have felt no need of food or drink until this very moment."

"Then I heard a voice which said: 'Let this man go back into the world, for our churches have need of him.' I heard the voice, but I could not see who was speaking. Then I prostrated myself on the ground and wept. 'Alas, alas, O Lord!' I said. 'Why hast Thou shown me these things only to take them away from me again? Thou dost cast me out today from before Thy face and send me back again to a worldly life without substance, since I am powerless to return on high. I entreat Thee, O Lord: turn not Thy mercy away from me. Let me remain here, I beseech Thee, lest, falling once more to earth, I perish.' The voice which had spoken to me said: 'Go in peace. I will watch over you until I bring you back once more to this place.' Then my guides left me and I turned back through the gate by which I had entered, weeping as I went."

As he said this, those who were with him were amazed. The holy man of God wept. Then he said: "Woe to me that I have dared to reveal such a mystery! The fragrance which I smelled in that holy place, and by which I have been nourished for three days without food or drink, has already left me. My tongue is covered with sores and has become so swollen that it fills my whole mouth. It is evident that it has not been pleasing in the eyes of my Lord God that these mysteries should be revealed. Thou knowest well, O Lord, that I did this in the simplicity of my heart, and not in a spirit of vainglory. Have mercy on me, I beseech Thee, and do not forsake me, according to Thy promise." When he had said this, Salvius became silent; then he began to eat and drink.

As I write these words, I fear that my account may seem quite incredible to some of my readers; and I am mindful of what the historian Sallust wrote: "When we record the virtue or glory of famous men, the reader will readily accept whatever he considers that he might have done himself; anything

which exceeds these bounds of possibility he will regard as untrue." I call Almighty God to witness that everything that I have related here I have heard from the lips of Salvius himself.

Many years later Saint Salvius was forced to leave his cell in order to be elected and consecrated bishop against his will. According to my reckoning, he had held this position for ten years when the plague broke out in Albi and most of the people died of it. Only a few of the citizens remained alive, but Saint Salvius, as a good shepherd, refused to leave his city. He stayed there, exhorting those still among the living to pray without ceasing, not to grow faint in their vigils, and to concentrate their minds and bodies on doing only what was good. "Always act in such a way," he would say, "that if God should decide to call you from this world, you may enter not into His judgment, but into His peace."

After a certain council which Salvius and I attended together, I was about to depart for home when I realized that I could not leave without bidding farewell to Salvius and embracing him. I found him and told him that I was about to leave. We went a little way outside the house and stood there conversing. "Look at the roof of that building," he said; "do you see what I see?" I answered, "I see only the new tiling which the King has had put there not too long ago." "Can you see nothing else?" he asked. "No," I replied, "I can see nothing." I began to think that he was mocking me. "Tell me if you can see something else," I said. He sighed deeply and said: " I see the naked sword of the wrath of God hanging over that house." He was not wrong in his prophecy. Twenty days later the two sons of King Chilperic died.

When the time came that God revealed to Salvius the nearness of his own death, he prepared his own coffin, washed himself carefully, and put on his shroud. He died in blessed contemplation, with his thoughts turned towards heaven. He was an extremely holy man. He had no desire at all for possessions and refused to accept money; if anyone forced him to accept it, he would immediately give it to the poor.

While he was bishop, the patrician Mummolus carried into captivity many of the inhabitants of Albi, but Salvius followed him and persuaded him to free them all. The Lord gave him such influence over these people that the captors accepted a reduction in the ransom which they had asked and even gave presents to Salvius. In this way he liberated the people of his own diocese and restored them to their former condition.

I have heard many other edifying stories about him. He died in the ninth year of the reign of King Childebert (584 A.D.).

THE SOUL AFTER DEATH

CONTEMPORARY "AFTER-DEATH" EXPERIENCES IN THE LIGHT OF ORTHODOX TEACHING ON THE AFTERLIFE

THE SUBJECT of life after death, quite suddenly, has become one of widespread popular interest in the Western world. In particular, a number of books purporting to describe "after-death" experiences have been published in the past two years, and reputable scientists and physicians have either authored such books themselves or give them their whole-hearted endorsement. One of these, the world-renowned physician and "expert" on problems of death and dying, Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, finds that these researches into after-death experiences "will enlighten many and will confirm what we have been taught for two thousand years — that there is life after death."

All this, of course, is an abrupt departure from the hitherto-prevailing atmosphere in medical and scientific circles, which in general have viewed death as a "taboo" subject and relegated any idea of after-death survival as belonging to the realm of fantasy or superstition, or at best as a matter of private belief for which there is no objective evidence.

The outward cause of this sudden change of opinion is a simple one: new techniques of resuscitating the "clinically dead" (in particular, by stimulation of the heart when it has stopped beating) have come into widespread use in recent years. Thus, people who have been technically "dead" (without pulse or heartbeat) have been restored to life in large numbers, and many of these people (once the "taboo" on this subject and the fear of being considered "crazy" had worn off) are now speaking about it openly.

But it is the *inward* cause of this change, as well as its "ideology," that are most interesting to us: why should this phenomenon have become suddenly so immensely popular, and in terms of what religious or philosophical view is it being generally understood? It has already become one of the "signs of the times," a symptom of the religious interest of our day; what, then, is its significance? We shall return to these questions after a closer examination of the phenomenon itself.

But first we must ask: on what basis are we to judge this phenomenon? Those who describe it themselves have no clear interpretation for it; often they are searching for such an interpretation in occultist or spiritistic texts. Some religious people (as well as scientists), sensing a danger to their established beliefs, simply deny the experiences as they are described, relegating them usually to the realm of "hallucinations." This has been done by some Protestants who are committed to the opinion either that the soul is in a state of unconsciousness after death, or that it goes immediately to be "with Christ"; likewise, doctrinaire unbelievers reject the idea that the soul survives at all, no matter what evidence is presented to them. But such experiences cannot be explained merely by denying them; they must be properly understood, both in themselves and in the whole context of what we know concerning the fate of the soul after death.

Unfortunately, some Orthodox Christians also, under the influence of modern materialistic ideas (as filtered through Protestantism and Roman Catholicism), have come to have rather vague and indefinite ideas of the afterlife. The author of one of the new books on after-death experiences (David R. Wheeler, *Journey to the Other Side,* Ace Books, New York, 1977) made a point of asking the opinions of various "sects" on the state of the soul after death. Thus, he called a priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and was given a very general opinion of the existence of heaven and hell, but was told that Orthodoxy does not have "any specific idea of what the hereafter would be like." The author could only conclude that "the Greek Orthodox view of the hereafter is not clear." (p. 130).

On the contrary, of course, Orthodox Christianity has a quite precise doctrine and view of life after death, beginning from the very moment of death itself. This doctrine is contained in the Holy Scripture (interpreted in the whole context of Christian doctrine), in writings of the Holy Fathers, and (especially as regards the specific experiences of the soul after dying) in many Lives of Saints and anthologies of personal experiences of this sort. The entire fourth book of the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome (+604), for example, is devoted to this subject. In our own days an anthology of these experiences, taken both from ancient Lives of Saints and more recent accounts, has appeared in English (*Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave,* Jordanville, N.Y., 1968). And just recently there was reprinted an English translation of a remarkable text written in the late 19th century by someone who returned to life after being dead for 36 hours (K. Uekskuell, "Unbelievable for Many but Actually a True Occurrence," *Orthodox Life,* July-August, 1976). The Orthodox Christian thus has a whole wealth of literature at his disposal, by means of which it is possible to understand the new "after-death" experiences and evaluate them in the light of the whole Christian doctrine of life after death.

The book that has kindled the contemporary interest in this subject was published in November, 1975, and was written by a young psychiatrist in the southern United States (Dr. Raymond A. Moody, Jr., *Life After Life,* Mockingbird Books, Atlanta, 1975). He was not then aware of any other studies or literature on this subject, but even as the book was being printed it became evident that there was already great interest in this subject and much had already been written about it. The overwhelming success of Dr. Moody's book (with over two million copies sold) brought the experiences of the dying into the light of widespread publicity, and in the two years since then a number of books and articles on these experiences have appeared in print. Among the most important are the articles (and forthcoming book) of Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, whose findings duplicate those of Dr. Moody, and the scientific studies of Drs. Osis and Haraldsson. Dr. Moody himself has written a sequel to his book (*Reflections*

on Life After Life, A Bantam-Mockingbird Book, 1977) with supplementary material and further reflections on the subject. The findings of these and other new books (all of which are in basic agreement concerning the phenomena in question) will be discussed below. As a starting point, we will examine Dr. Moody's first book, which is a fairly objective and systematic approach to the whole subject.

Dr. Moody, in the past ten years, has collected the personal testimonies of some 150 persons who have had actual death or near-death experiences, or who have related to him the experiences of others as they were dying; out of these he has concentrated on some fifty persons with whom he has conducted detailed interviews. He attempts to be objective in presenting this evidence, although he admits that the book "naturally reflects the background, opinions and prejudices of its author" (p. 9) who by religious affiliation is a Methodist of rather liberal views. And in fact there are some drawbacks to the book as an objective study of "after-death" phenomena.

First, the author does not give a single *entire* "death" experience from start to finish, but gives only excerpts (usually very brief) from each of fifteen separate elements which form his "model" of the "complete" experience of death. But in actual fact the experiences of the dying as described in this and other recent books are often so different in details one from the other that it seems to be at best premature to try to include them all in one "model." Dr. Moody's "model" seems in places artificial and contrived, although this, of course, does not lessen the value of the actual testimonies which he gives.

Second, the author has joined together two rather different experiences: actual experiences of "clinical death," and "near-death" experiences. The author admits the difference between them, but claims that they form a "continuum" (p. 20) and should be studied together. In cases where experiences which begin before death end in the experience of death itself (whether or not the person is revived), there is indeed a "continuum" of experience; but several of the experiences which he describes (the recalling of the events of one's life in rapid order when one is in danger of drowning; the

(Continued on Page 221)

The Teaching of St. Symeon the New Theologian

ONE OF THE MOST beloved Holy Fathers today among Orthodox Christians, certainly in the Russian Church, is St. Symeon the New Theologian, one of the only three great Fathers whom the Church has granted the title of "Theologians" or speakers about God par excellence. St. John the Evangelist is the paramount Theologian of apostolic times; St. Gregory of Nazianzus (+390) is the most exalted Theologian of the golden age of Patristic literature; and St. Symeon (+1020) is the great Theologian of later times — the second Christian millenium.

Although separated from us now by nearly a thousand years, St. Symeon's Christian world was not so different from ours as might appear from the difference of epoch. By his time Orthodox Christianity had become well established; outwardly it has scarcely changed at all in the centuries since then. But therefore it was the more easily taken for granted, and St. Symeon might well be speaking to our own times when he emphasizes the need to return to the freshness of authentic Christian experience and not merely depend on the outward forms of church life, which are not soul-saving in themselves, but require conscious appropriation by believers. Unfortunately, this spiritual emphasis of his is often misused in our own day to defend a false "mysticism" and false "gifts of the Holy Spirit" which are emotional (at best) rather than spiritual and would only have evoked his righeous wrath. The more ecstatically "mystical" of St. Symeon's writings (his "Hymns"), as recent Fathers have warned us, are better left untouched by us Christians of the latter times who are too immersed in our own passions and filth of this most debased and evil of epochs.

But there are many writings of St. Symeon which are accessible to and appropriate for us, the last Christians — and particularly those which arouse and inspire us to conscious and fervent awareness of the basic dogmas of our Faith. Among these writings are the Saint's Homilies on Adam, the first-created world, and the future age.

Orthodox Christians today all too often have rather vague notions of the future age of blessedness which is the goal of our Christian life on earth; various chiliastic heresies and ideas, promising some kind of "paradise on earth," are very much in the air today and exert much influence, often unconsciously, on Christians who are not fully aware of their Faith and its goal. Bound up with this, and often largely to blame for it, is a poor knowledge of the *beginnings of man* and the universe — the creation, the first-created world, Adam and his fall; the agnostic and atheistic philosophies of beginnings so common today have done much to confuse in this regard even well-meaning Orthodox Christians.

The authentic Orthodox Patristic view of man's beginning and end is thus sorely needed to put in order the disarray of private opinions about these matters. St. Symeon's Homilies are one of the primary sources of this view.

And yet, St. Symeon speaks with such boldness and assurance on these subjects that one may stop and ask: how does he know all this? We have become used to a "knowledge" based on speculation and guesses, particularly on subjects as remote from ordinary experience as the first-created world and the future age. Today's scientists make their speculations on the beginnings of man and the universe based on uniformitarian projections from their present fragmentary discoveries and imperfect knowledge; today's "theologians" (even many who are Orthodox) usually make just as speculative projections based on their imperfect reading of the book of Genesis and perhaps some Holy Fathers or some poorly-assimilated scientific information. But this is all the sphere of imperfect human wisdom, a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; how, then, does St. Symeon give us the teaching which is authentically Christian, and not a mere result of speculation and guessing?

St. Symeon speaks from divine revelation. First, his basis is always scriptural — but we are astonished to see a depth of meaning in his use of scriptural quotations which we would never have seen by ourselves. And this is because, second, he speaks *from personal experience.*

St. Gregory the Sinaite (+1346), another saint of more recent times who attained the heights of spiritual life and thus spoke with certainty of matters which the rest of us see only dimly, describes in one passage of his

writings the "eight primary visions" of the state of perfect prayer. These visions are: God, the Angelic powers, the composition of visible things, the condescension of the Word (the Incarnation), the general resurrection, the Second Coming of Christ, eternal torments, the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. The objects of these visions, St. Gregory teaches, "are clearly beheld and known by those who have attained by grace complete purity of mind" ("Chapters on Commandments and Dogmas," 130, in the Russian *Philokalia*). Thus he, and other saints who have attained to this state, can speak at first hand of the mysteries of our Faith which they have beheld in divine vision — even though they can say rather little of them to us who have no direct experience of them, even as St. Paul, after being raised in vision to the third heaven, had chiefly to emphasize how unutterable was what he heard there (II Cor. 12:4), and how far above ordinary human experience are those things that await the Christian in the coming age (I Cor. 2:9).

Among these "primary visions" which the greatest saints behold on earth are, not only the future age of torments (hell) and blessedness (heaven), but even "the composition of visible things" (obviously a mystical vision and not a scientific measurement of them!). Anoher saint of the most exalted spiritual life, St. Isaac the Syrian (7th century), in one passage of his Homilies, gives us a hint of his own experience of this. In describing how the soul is enraptured at the thought of the future age of incorruption, St. Isaac writes: "And from this one is already exalted in his mind to that which preceded the composition of the world, when there was no creature, nor heaven, nor earth, nor Angels, nothing of that which was brought into being, and to how God, solely by His good will, suddenly brought everything from non-being into being, and everything stood before Him in perfection" (Homily 21, Russian edition; Homily 85, Greek edition).

And thus we see to whom we should turn for a true interpretation of the first and last things: the surest interpreters of Genesis and the Apocalypse are those Holy Fathers who, like Moses and St. John the Evangelist themselves, beheld the beginning and the end in the state of divine vision. St. Isaac the Syrian describes in another Homily how this knowledge based on faith and vision surpasses ordinary human knowledge. "Knowledge preserves the bounds of nature, but faith goes above nature . . . The capabilities of knowledge for 5000 years, or a little more or less than this (i.e., the time from the creation to the Incarnation of Christ, which differs somewhat in the Greek and Hebrew Old Testament chronologies), governed the world, and man in no way could raise his head from the earth and acknowledge his Creator, until our Faith

St. Symeon the New Theologian
Icon by Photios Kontoglou

shone forth and delivered us from the darkness of earthly doing and vain submission to the empty soaring of the mind. And even now when we have found an imperturbable sea and an inexhaustible treasure, again we desire to turn away toward tiny springs. There is no knowledge that would not be poor, no matter how much it might be enriched; but the treasures of faith can be contained neither by the heaven nor by the earth" (Homily 25, Russian edition; Homily 62, Greek edition).

St. Symeon is one of the Church's great seers of these treasures of faith; he speaks of them with such certainty precisely because he has seen them. His profound homilies on Adam and the future age are of special value to Orthodox Christians because they give the theological foundation of the Christian life of struggle: the original state of man from which Adam fell tells us of our deepest nature, of which our present fallen nature is a corruption that is to be overcome; and the future state of blessedness is the goal to which our Christian struggle is aimed, and to which we can attain, by God's grace, even despite our fallen state.

The following translation of St. Symeon's celebrated Homily 45, where these matters are most clearly discussed, has been made from the Russian translation of Bishop Theophan the Recluse (Moscow, 1892). This great Father of the 19th century made it a principle to publish only what is of practical value for Orthodox Christian strugglers; thus, in his translations of St. Symeon we have an additional guarantee of the authenticity and value of the teaching which is to be found there. May it serve now to inspire — in a sober-minded way — the Christians of these last times in the narrow path that leads to salvation and deification.

Adam and the First-Created World

HOMILY 45

By Saint Symeon the New Theologian

1. ON THE CREATION OF THE WORLD AND THE CREATION OF ADAM

GOD, IN THE BEGINNING, before He planted Paradise and gave it over to the first-created ones, in five days set in order the earth and what is on it, and the heaven and what is in it. And on the sixth day He created Adam and placed him as lord and king of the whole visible creation. Then there was not yet Paradise. But this world was from God as a kind of Paradise, although it was material and sensuous. God gave it over to the authority of Adam and all his descendents, as the divine Scripture says, *And God said, let us make man according to Our image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the flying creatures of heaven, and the beasts and cattle and all the earth, and all the reptiles that creep upon the earth. And God made man, according to the image of God He made him; male and female He made them. And God blessed them, saying, Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the seas, and the flying creatures of heaven, and all the cattle and all the earth.*

Do you see how God gave over to man at the beginning this whole world as a kind of Paradise? Therefore, immediately after this He says also, *Behold I have given to you every seed-bearing herb with seed which is upon the face of the earth, and every tree which has in itself the fruit of seed that is sown, to you it shall be for food. And to all the wild beasts of the earth, and to all the flying creatures of heaven, and to every reptile that creeps upon the earth, even every green plant for food* (Gen. 1:26-30). Do you see how everything visible which is on the earth, and that is in the sea — everything God gave over into the authority of Adam and his descendents? For what He said to Adam He said to all of us, just as to the Apostles He said, *What I say unto*

you I say unto all (Mark 13.37), because He knew that our race was to increase and that there was to be an innumerable multitude of men.

If now, after we transgressed the commandment and were condemned to die, people have so multiplied, then just imagine how many there would have been if all those born from the creation of the world had not died! And what kind of life they would have lived, being immortal and incorrupt, strangers to sin, sorrows, cares, and difficult necessities! And how, prospering in the keeping of the commandments and the good ordering of the dispositions of the heart, in time they would have ascended into the most perfect glory, and being changed, would have drawn near to God; and the soul of each one would have become light-bearing by reason of the illuminations which would have been poured out upon it from the Divinity! And this sensuous and crudely material body would have become as it were immaterial and spiritual, above all senses; and the joy and rejoicing with which we then would have been filled by fellowship one with the other, in truth would have been unutterable and beyond human thought. But let us return again to our subject.

And thus God gave over to Adam this whole world which had been created by Him in six days, concerning which creation listen to what the Divine Scripture says: *And God saw all the things that He had made, and behold, they were very good . . . And God finished on the sixth day His works which He made, and He rested on the seventh day from all His works which He made* (Gen. 1:31, 2:2). And further the same Scripture, desiring to instruct us as to how God made man, says: *And God made man of the dust of the earth, and breathed upon his face the breath of life, and the man became a living soul* (Gen. 2:7).

Then He does as some king or prince or rich man who, possessing any kind of place, does not assign it all for one and the same use, but divides it into many parts, and assigns one part for sowing, on another plants vineyards, and another leaves untilled so that it might be overgrown with grass and give pasture, but the best and most beautiful he chooses for the building of his palace, near which he plants flowerbeds and gardens, and he devises much else and arranges what can give satisfaction. And his palace and all the rooms in it he arranges in the best fashion, so that it might be distinct from the dwellings of other men. All this he surrounds with a wall, with gates and locks, and next to them he places guards so that evil men might not be let in, but entrance might be given only to good men, acquaintances and friends. So also did God, in similar fashion arrange for the first-created man. For after He had created everything else, and made man also, and rested on the seventh day from all the

works which He had begun to do, — He planted Paradise in Eden in the East as a royal dwelling, and led into it as king the man whom He had made.

But why did not God put in order Paradise on the seventh day, but planted it in the East only after He had finished all the rest of the creation? Because He, as the Foreknower of everything, arranged the whole creation in order and in an orderly sequence, and He assigned seven days that they might be an image of the ages which were subsequently to pass in time. But Paradise He planted after those seven days, that it might be an image of the future age. But why did the Holy Spirit not place the eighth day together with the seven days in the count? Because it was unfitting to place within the count the eighth together with the seven, for they, moving cyclicly, produce so many weeks, years, and centuries, but it was proper that the eighth day be placed outside the seven, since it does not have any cyclic movement.

Behold yet more: the Divine Scripture does not say that God created Paradise, nor that He said "Let it be," but rather that he "planted" it: *And God planted Paradise in Eden in the East . . . And God made to spring up also out of the earth every tree beautiful to the eye and good for food* (Gen. 2:8-9), with various fruits which never spoiled and never ceased, but were always fresh and sweet and furnished for the first-created ones great satisfaction and pleasantness. For it was fitting to furnish also an incorruptible enjoyment for these bodies of the first-created ones, which were incorrupt. Therefore their life also in Paradise was not burdened with labors and not weighed down with misfortunes. Adam was made with a body that was incorrupt, although material and not yet spiritual, and was placed by the Creator God as an immortal king over an incorrupt world, not only over Paradise, but also over the whole of creation which was under the heavens.

2. ON THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE COMMANDMENT AND THE BANISHMENT FROM PARADISE

GOD GAVE the first-created ones a commandment, and commanded them not to taste of the tree of knowledge alone; but Adam disdained this commandment of God, not believing the words of the Creator and Master, Who said, *In whatsoever day ye eat of it, ye shall surely die,* but respected as more true the word of the evil devil who said, *Ye shall not surely die. But in whatsoever day ye eat of it, ye shall become as gods, knowing good and evil,* and he tasted of that tree. Therefore he was immediately stripped of that incorrupt garment and glory, and was clothed in the nakedness of corruption; and

seeing himself naked, he hid himself, and sewing together fig leaves he girded himself so as to cover his shame. Therefore, when God called out to him, *Adam, where art thou?* he replied, *I heard Thy voice and I feared because I was naked, and I hid myself.* God, calling him to repentance, said to him, *Who told thee that thou wast naked, unless thou hast eaten of the tree concerning which I charged thee of it alone not to eat?* But Adam did not wish to say, "I sinned," but said rather the contrary of this and placed the blame for the transgression upon God Who created everything "very good," saying to Him, *The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate.* And after him she also placed the blame upon the serpent, and they did not wish at all to repent and, falling down before the Lord God, beg forgiveness of Him. For this God banished them from Paradise, as from a royal palace, to live in this world as exiles. At that time also He decreed that a flaming sword should be turned and should guard the entrance into Paradise. And God did not curse Paradise, since it was the image of the future unending life of the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. If it were not for this reason, it would have been fitting to curse it most of all, since within it was performed the transgression of Adam. But God did not do this, but cursed only the whole rest of the earth, which also was incorrupt and brought forth everything by itself; and this was in order that Adam might not have any longer a life free from exhausting labors and sweat. *Cursed is the ground in thy labors,* said the Lord to Adam; *in pain shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread until thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken; for earth thou art, and unto earth thou shalt return* (Gen. 3:17-19).

And thus it was fitting in all justice for the one who had become corruptible and mortal by reason of the transgression of the commandment, to live upon the corruptible earth and be nourished with corruptible food; for since a life without labor and an abundant food which grew by itself had caused him to forget God and the good things which He had given him and to disdain His commandment, he was therefore justly condemned to work the earth in the sweat of labor and in this way receive from it food little by little as from some kind of steward. Do you see how then the earth received the criminal after it had been cursed and had been deprived of its original productivity by which fruits were produced from it by themselves without labor? And why was this? In order that it might be worked by him in sweat and labors and thus give him that little which it grows for his need, for the support of life, and if it will not be worked, to remain fruitless and to grow only thorns and thistles.

Then also all creatures, when they saw that Adam had been banished from Paradise, no longer wished to submit to him, the criminal: the sun did not wish to shine for him, nor did the moon and the other stars wish to show themselves to him; the springs did not wish to gush forth water, and the rivers to continue their course; the air thought no longer to blow so as not to allow Adam, the sinner, to breathe; the beasts and all the other animals of the earth, when they saw that he had been stripped of his first glory, began to despise him, and all immediately were ready to fall upon him. The heaven, in a certain fashion, was about to strive to fall upon him, and the earth did not wish to bear him any longer. But God, Who created everything and made man — what did He do? Knowing before the creation of the world that Adam would transgress His commandment, and having foreordained for him a new life and a re-creation, which things he was to receive in rebirth in Holy Baptism by virtue of the economy of the Incarnation of His only begotten Son and our God, He restrained all these creatures by His power, and in His compassion and goodness did not allow them immediately to strive against man, and commanded that the creation should remain in submission to him, and having become corrupt, should serve corrupt man for whom it had been created, with the aim that when man again should be renewed and become spiritual, incorrupt and immortal, then also the whole creation, which had been subjected by God to man to serve him, might be delivered from this servitude, might be renewed together with him, and become incorrupt and as it were spiritual. All this the All-Merciful God foreordained before the creation of the world.

And thus when all had been set in order by God, as has been said, Adam was banished from Paradise, lived, begat children and died. And this was the way it was with all those also who came from him. The people of that time, finding out from Adam and Eve about all that had happened, remembered the fall of Adam and bowed down to God and worshipped Him as their Master. Therefore, Abel together with Cain offered God sacrifices, each one from his own possessions. And the Scripture says that God accepted the offering and the sacrifice of Abel, but the sacrifice of Cain He did not accept, which when Cain found out he was sorrowed unto death, began to envy his brother Abel, and killed him. But after this Enoch, having pleased God, *was translated* (Gen. 5:24), as Elias also later was taken into heaven in a fiery chariot. By this God wished to show that if, after the sentence pronounced on Adam and his descendents, and after his banishment, He was pleased to honor Enoch and Elias, the descendents of Adam who had pleased Him, by translating them and granting them long life, and to deliver them from death and from entering hell —

would He not have glorified and honored all the more first-created Adam himself if he had not transgressed the commandment given him, or after the transgression had repented, and would He not have had mercy upon him and left him to live in Paradise?

Thus the men of antiquity, for the course of many years, learned one from the other by tradition, and knew their Creator and God. But later, when people had multiplied and began to give their mind over from their youth into evil thoughts, they forgot God and no longer knew their Creator, and began not only to worship demons, but to deify even such creatures as had been given them by God to serve them. From this they gave themselves over into every impurity and defiled by their unclean works the earth, the air, the heaven, and everything under the heaven. For nothing so defiles and so makes impure the pure work of the hands of God as when someone begins to deify it and worship it like God, Who created the universe. And when finally the whole creation, being thus deified, became impure, and all men had fallen into the extreme abyss of evil — then the Son of God and God came down to earth so as to re-create man who had become so low, to give life to him who had become dead, and to call him from deception and error.

3. ON THE ECONOMY OF THE INCARNATION OF THE LORD, AND OF HOW HE WAS INCARNATE FOR OUR SAKE

BUT I BEG YOU to heed my words, because they begin now to touch upon a most great mystery, the explanation of which is soul-profiting both for us and for those who will live after us. It befits us now to ascend to the contemplation of the Incarnation of the Son and Word of God, and His unutterable birth from the Ever-Virgin Mother of God Mary. We must do this by means of some kind of image, and through it draw near to the understanding of the mystery hidden from the ages of the economy of the Incarnation, for the salvation of our race. Just as then, at the creation of our ancestor Eve, God took the rib of Adam and made the woman from it, in the same way now also our Maker and Creator God took flesh from the Mother of God and Ever-Virgin Mary, as a kind of leaven and a certain beginning from the dough of our nature, and united it with His Divinity, which is unattainable and unapproachable — or, to say it better, He united His whole Divine Hypostasis essentially with our nature, and this human nature he joined without confusion to His Essence and made it His own, so that the very Creator of Adam became unchangingly and unalterably perfect man. For just as from the rib of Adam He made woman, so

from the daughter of Adam, the Ever-Virgin Mother of God Mary, He borrowed the virginal flesh without seed, and being clothed in it, became man like unto the first-created Adam, so as to accomplish this work, namely: just as Adam, through the transgression of the commandment of God was the cause of the fact that all men became corruptible and mortal, so also Christ, the new Adam, through the fulfillment of all justice, became the first-fruit of our rebirth into incorruption and immortality. This the divine Paul explains in the place where he says, *The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly* (I Cor. 15:47-48). And inasmuch as our Lord Jesus Christ became perfect man in soul and body, like us in everything except sin, so He gives of His Divinity to us also who believe in Him, and makes us like to Him in the nature and essence of His Divinity. Reflect on this most wondrous mystery: the Son of God received from us flesh, which He did not have by nature, and became man, which He was not, and to those who believe in Him He communicates of His Divinty, which no man ever had in any way, — and these believers are gods by grace. For Christ gives to them to be *the sons of God,* as John the Theologian says (John 1:12, I John 3:2). As a result of this they become and forever afterwards remain gods by grace, and never will they cease to be such. Hear what the Apostle Paul says to us when he says, *As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly* (I Cor. 15:49). What we have said about this is sufficient. Now let us return again to our subject.

Inasmuch as the God of everything existing, our Lord Jesus Christ, came down to earth and became man in order to re-create and renew man and to bring down blessing upon the whole creation which had been subjected to the curse for the sake of man, therefore, first of all He brought to life the soul which He had received, and deified it, while His most pure nad divine body, although He made it divine, nevertheless He bore corruptible and crudely material. For the body which eats food, drinks, is labored, sheds sweat, is bound, is beaten, is nailed to the Cross, is evidently corruptible and material, because everything that has been mentioned is the property of a corruptible body. Therefore also it died, and was placed in the grave as dead; and after the Lord's third-day Resurrection, His body also was resurrected incorruptible and divine. Therefore, when He came out of the tomb He did not violate the seals which were on the tomb, and later He came in and went out through closed doors.

But why, together with His soul, did He not immediately make His body incorruptible and spiritual? Because Adam, after transgressing the com-

mandment of God, in soul died immediately, but in body he died only after so many years. Corresponding with this, the Lord and Saviour also first resurrected, brought to life, and deified the soul which immediately after the transgression of the commandment had borne the penance of death; and afterwards God was pleased to arrange that His body also might receive the incorruptibility of resurrection, just as in Adam after many years it had received the penance of death. But Christ did not do only this; He also descended even to hell, delivered from eternal bonds and brought to life the souls of the saints who were confined there; but their bodies He did not resurrect then, but left them in the tombs until the general resurrection of all.

And this mystery, made evident for the whole world in the way we have related, which occurred at the time of the economy of the incarnation of Christ, afterwards also was accomplished and is accomplished in every Christian in the same way. For when we receive the grace of Jesus Christ our God, we become participants of His Divinty (II Peter 1:4), and when we eat His most pure Body, that is, when we receive communion of the Holy Mysteries, we are of one body with Him, and in truth akin to Him, as also the divine Paul says, *For we are members of His body,* of His flesh and of His bones (Eph. 5:30), and as again the Evangelist John says, that *of His fullness we have all received* (John 1:16). Thus by grace we become like unto Him, our man-loving God and Lord, and in soul are renewed from being old, and brought to life from being dead as we were.

Thus every saint is as we have said; but their bodies do not become immediately incorruptible and spiritual. Rather, just as iron which has been ignited by fire becomes a partaker of the brightnes of fire, putting aside its natural darkness, and as soon as the fire goes out of it and it grows cold, it becomes again dark, so is it also with the bodies of the saints: when they are partakers of that divine fire, that is, the grace of the Holy Spirit which fills their souls, they are sanctified,
and being penetrated with that divine fire, they are bright, distinct from all other bodies and more honorable than they; but when the soul goes out of the body, then their bodies are given over to corruption, and some decay little by little and become dust, while others do not decay for the course of many years, and are not either completely incorrupt or again completely corrupt, but preserve in themselves the traces both of corruption and incorruption, until they receive perfect incorruption and are renewed by the perfect resurrection at the time of the general resurrection of the dead.

And for what reason is this? For this reason: it is not fitting for the bodies of men to be clothed in the glory of the resurrection and to become incorrupt before the renewal of all creatures. But just as in the beginning, first the whole creation was created incorrupt, and then from it man was taken and made, so also it is fitting that again first all the creation should become incorrupt, and then the corruptible bodies of men also should be renewed and become incorrupt, so that once more the whole man might be incorrupt and spiritual and might dwell in an incorruptible, eternal, and spiritual dwelling.

And that this is true, listen to what the Apostle Peter says: *The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved wih fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up* (II Peter 3:10). This does not mean that the heavens and the elements will disappear, but that they will be reordered and renewed, and will come into a better and an incorruptible condition. And this that I say is again evident from the words of the same Apostle Peter, who says: *We look for new heavens and a new earth, according to His promise* (II Peter 3:13), that is, according to the promise of Christ and our God Who said, *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away* (Matt. 24:35) — by the passing away of heaven signifying its change, that is, the heaven will be changed, but My words will not be changed, but will remain forever unchanged. And the holy Prophet David prophesied the same thing where he says, *And as a vesture shalt Thou fold them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail* (Ps. 101:27). From such words what else is evident than what I have said?

4. HOW IS THE WHOLE CREATION AGAIN TO BE RENEWED?

BUT LET US SEE how the creation is to be renewed and come again into the condition of its original beauty. I suppose that there is not a single Christian who will think to disbelieve the words of the Lord Who gave the promise to make the heaven new and the earth new, that is, that just as our own bodies, which are now dissolved into the elements but still are not turned into nothingness, again are to be renewed through the resurrection, — so also the heaven and the earth with all that is in them, that is, the whole creation, is to be renewed and to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and these elements together with us will become partakers of the brightness proceeding from the Divine fire. Just as a bronze vessel that has become old and useless, becomes new again when a metal-worker melts it in the fire and recasts it, in

the same way also the creation, having become old and useless because of our sins, will be as it were melted in the fire by God the Creator and recast, and will appear new, incomparably brighter than it is now. Do you see how all creatures are to be renewed by fire?

This is why the divine Peter says: *Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy living and godliness?* And a little later he says: *Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in His sight. And account that the long suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you, as also in his Epistles, speaking in them of these things, wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction* (II Peter 3:11, 14-16). And this was done not only then, but in the present time also; very many, or almost all of us do it, in our ignorance constantly corrupting and reinterpreting the words of the divine Scripture, and by all means striving to make them a cooperator in our passions and in our ruinous lusts. But let us see what the divine Paul says about the creation and its renewal.

Having said that *I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us,* right after this he says: *For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God* (Rom. 8:18-19). He calls "expectation" the mighty desire of the creation that there might be fulfilled more quickly the revelation or the manifestation in glory of the sons of God which is to occur in the general resurrection. For then, in the general resurrection, with the coming of the Son of God, the sons of God are to be revealed, their beauty and glory are to be manifest, and they will become entirely, that is, in soul and body, light-bearing and most glorious, as has been written: *Then the righteous,* that is, the sons of the righteous God, *will shine forth like the sun* (Matt. 13:43).

But lest someone should think that what has been said by the Apostle refers to some other kind of creation, he adds: *For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it in hope* (Rom. 8:20). Do you see that the creation did not wish to be subject to and serve Adam after he had transgressed the commandment of God, because it saw that he had fallen from divine glory? It was for this that God, before the creation of the world, foreordained that the salvation of mankind should be through the rebirth which he was to receive by power of the economy of the Incarnation of Christ, and in this hope He subjected the creation to man, and subjected it to corruption, since the man for whom it had been created had be-

come corrupt, — so that the creation might every year furnish him a corruptible food, presuming that when He should renew man and make him incorrupt, immortal, and spiritual, then, together with him, He would renew also the whole creation and make it eternal and incorrupt. Here is what the Apostle has revealed with the above-cited words: *The creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it in hope.* That is: the creation was subjected to men not by itself, and not by its own will did it become corruptible, give corruptible fruits, and produce thorns and thistles; rather, it submitted to the commandment of God Who ordained this for it in the hope that He would again renew it. So as the more fully to confirm this the Apostle says finally: *That the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God* (Rom. 3:21). Do you see that this whole creation in the beginning was incorrupt and was created by God in the manner of Paradise? But later it was subjected by God to corruption, and submitted to the vanity of men.

5. WHAT IS THE BRIGHT CONDITION THE WHOLE CREATION IS AGAIN TO RECEIVE?

YOU SHOULD KNOW likewise what is to be the glory and the brightly-shining state of the creation in the future age. For when it will be renewed, it will not again be the same as it was when it was created in the beginning. But it will be such as, according to the word of the divine Paul, our body will also be. Concerning our body the Apostle says: *It is sown a natural body, but is raised* not as the body of the first-created one was before the transgression of the commandment, that is, material, sensuous, changeable, having need of sensuous food, but *it is raised a spiritual body* (I Cor. 15:44) and unchanging, such as was the body of our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, after the Resurrection, He being the first-born from among the dead, which body was incomparably superior to the body of the first-created Adam. In the same way also the whole creation, according to the commandment of God, is to be, after the general resurrection, not such as it was created, material and sensuous, but it is to be re-created and to become a certain immaterial and spiritual dwelling, surpassing every sense, and as the Apostle says of us, *We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye* (I Cor. 15:51). Thus also the whole creation, after it shall burn up in the divine fire, is to be changed, that there may be fulfilled also the prophecy of David who says that *the righteous shall inherit the earth* (Ps. 36:29) — of course, not the sensuous earth. For how is it possible that those who have become spiritual will inherit a sensuous earth? No, they will inherit a spiritual

and immaterial earth, so as to have on it a dwelling worthy of their glory after they shall be vouchsafed to receive bodies that are bodiless and above every sense.

Thus the whole creation, after it will be renewed and become spiritual, will become a dwelling which is immaterial, incorruptible, unchanging, and eternal. The heaven will become incomparably more brilliant and bright than it appears now; it will become completely new. The earth will receive a new, unutterable beauty, being clothed in many-formed, unfading flowers, bright and spiritual. The sun will shine seven times more powerfully than now, and the whole world will become more perfect than any word can describe. Having become spiritual and divine, it will become united with the noetic world; it will be a certain mental Paradise, a heavenly Jerusalem, the inalienable inheritance of the sons of God. Such an earth has not been inherited as yet by a single man; we are all strangers and foreigners. But when the earthly will be united with the heavenly, then also the righteous will inherit that already-renewed earth whose inheritors are to be those meek ones who are blessed by the Lord.

Now, for the time being, some of the earthly is being united with the heavenly, and some is yet to be united with it. The souls of the saints, as we have said, even though they are still united with the body in this world, are united with the grace of the Holy Spirit, are renewed, are changed for the better and resurrected from mental death. Later, after separation from the body, they will depart into glory and into the unsetting, brightly-shining light. Their bodies, however, are not yet vouchsafed this, but remain in the tombs and in corruption. But they also are to become incorruptible during the general resurrection, when also all this visible and sensuous creation will become incorruptible, and will be united with the heavenly and invisible. This must happen first, and then there will come with power and great glory the most desired and sweetest Jesus Christ, our King and God, to judge the world and to give to each according to his deeds. For this He will divide the renewed creation into many mansions and abodes, as if it were a great house or some kind of royal palace with a multitude of various apartments, and He will give to each his part, according to the brightness and glory acquired by his virtues. Thus, the Kingdom of Heaven will be one, will have a single King over all, Who will be visible from everywhere to all the righteous. He will remain with each of the righteous, and each of the righteous will remain with Him; He will brightly shine in each one, and each one will brightly shine in Him. But woe to those who then will be seen to be outside that heavenly dwelling!

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experience of entering a "tunnel" when one is administered an anesthetic like ether) are fairly commonly experienced by people who are not close to clinical death and never experience it, and so they perhaps belong to the "model" of some more general experience and may be only incidental to the experience of dying. Some of the books now appearing are even less discriminating in their selection of experiences to record, including "out-of-body" experiences in general together with the actual experiences of death and dying.

Third, the very fact that the author approaches these phenomena "scientifically," with no clear concepion in advance of what the soul actually undergoes at death, lays him open to numerous confusions and misconceptions about this experience, which can never be removed by a mere collection of descriptions of it; those who describe it themselves inevitably add their own interpretations to it. The author himself admits that it is actually impossible to study this question "scientifically," and in fact he turns for an explanation of it to parallel experiences in such occult writings as those of Swedenborg and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead,* noting that he intends now to look more closely at "the vast literature on paranormal and occult phenomena" to increase his understanding of the events he has studied (p. 9).

All of these factors will lead us not to expect too much from this book and other similar books; they will not give us a complete and coherent account of what happens to the soul after death. Still, there is a sufficient residue of actual experiences of clinical death in this and other new books to merit one's serious attention, especially in view of the fact that some people are already interpreting these experiences in a way hostile to the traditional Christian view of the afterlife, as though they "disproved" the existence either of heaven or (especially) of hell. How, then, are we to understand these experiences?

The fifteen elements Dr. Moody describes as belonging to the "complete" experience of dying may be reduced, for purposes of discussion, to some five main characteristics of the experience, which we shall here present and compare with the Orthodox literature on this subject.

1. THE "OUT-OF-BODY" EXPERIENCE.

The first thing that happens to a person who has died, according to these accounts, is that he leaves his body and exists entirely separate from it, without once losing consciousness. He is often able to observe everything around him, including his own dead body and the resuscitation attempts on it; he feels himself to be in a state of painless warmth and ease, rather as if he were "floating"; he is totally unable to affect his environment by speech or touch, and thus often feels a great "loneliness"; his thought processes usually become much quicker than they had been in the body. Here are some brief excerpts from these experiences:

"The day was bitterly cold, yet while I was in that blackness all I felt was warmth and the most extreme comfort I have ever experienced . . . I remember thinking, 'I must be dead' " (p. 27).

"I began to experience the most wonderful feelings. I couldn't feel a thing in the world except peace, comfort, ease — just quietness" (p. 27).

"I saw them resuscitating me. It was realy strange. I wasn't very high; it was almost like I was on a pedestal, but not above them to any great extent; just maybe looking over them. I tried talking to them, but nobody could hear me, nobody would listen to me" (p. 37).

"People were walking up from all directions to get to the wreck . . . As they came real close, I would try to turn around, to get out of their way, but they would just walk *through* me" (p. 37).

"I was unable to touch anything, unable to communicate with any of the people around. It is an awesome, lonely feeling, a feeling of complete isolation. I knew that I was completely alone, by myself" (p. 43).

Occasionally there is striking "objective proof" that

a person is actually outside the body at this time, as when people are able to relate conversations or give precise details of events that occurred, even in adjoining rooms or farther away, while they were "dead." Among other examples like this, Dr. Kubler-Ross mentions one remarkable case where a blind person "saw" and later described everything clearly in the room where she "died," although when she came back to life she was once again blind — a striking evidence that it is not the eye that sees (nor the brain that thinks, for the mental faculties become quicker after death), but rather the *soul* that performs these actions *through* the physical organs as long as the body is alive, but *by its own power* when the body is dead. (Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross, "Death Does Not Exist," *The Co-Evolution Quarterly,* Summer, 1977, pp. 103-4.)

None of this should sound very strange to an Orthodox Christian; the experience here described is what Christians know as the separation of the soul from the body at the moment of death. It is characteristic of our times of unbelief that these people seldom use the Christian vocabulary or realize that it is their *soul* that has been set free from the body and now experiences everything; they are usually simply puzzled at the new state they find themselves in.

The account of an after-death experience entitled "Unbelievable for Many but Actually a True Occurrence" was written by just such a person: a baptized Orthodox Christian who, in the spirit of the late 19th century, remained indifferent to the truths of his own Faith and even disbelieved in life after death. His experience some eighty years ago is of great value to us today, and seems even providential in view of the new after-death experiences of today, because it is a single whole experience of what happens to the soul after death (going far beyond the brief and fragmentary experiences described in the new books), made by a sensitive individual who began from the modern state of unbelief and ended by recognizing the truths of Orthodox Christianity — to such an extent that he ended his days as a monk. This little book actually may serve as a "test-case" against which to judge the new experiences. It was approved, as containing nothing opposed to the

Orthodox teaching on life after death, by one of the leading Orthodox missionary-printers at the turn of the century, Archbishop Nikon of Vologda.

After describing the final agony of his physical death and the terrible weight pressing him down to earth, the author of this account relates that

"Suddenly I felt a calm within myself. I opened my eyes, and everything that I saw in the course of that minute, down to the slightest details, registered in my memory with complete clarity.

"I saw that I was standing alone within a room; to the right of me, standing about something in a semi-circle, the whole medical staff was crowded together . . . This group struck me with surprise: at the place where they were standing there was a bed. What was it that drew the attention of these people, what were they looking at, when I already was not there, when I was standing in the midst of the room?

"I moved forward and looked where they all were looking: *there on the bed I was lying.*

"I do not have any recollection of experiencing anything like fear when seeing my double; I only was perplexed: how can this be? I feel myself here, and at the same time I am there also . . .

"I wanted to touch myself, to take the left hand by the right: my hand went right through my body as through empty space . . . I called the doctor, but the atmosphere in which I was found turned out to be entirely unfit for me; it did not receive and transmit the sounds of my voice, and I understood myself to be in a state of utter dissociation from all that was about me. I understood my strange state of solitude, and a feeling of panic came over me. There really was something inexpressibly horrible in this extraordinary solitude . . .

"I glanced, and here only for the first time the thought emerged: is it possible that that which has happened to me, in our language, in the language of living people, is defined by the word 'death'? This occurred to me because the body lying on the bed had all the appearance of a corpse . . .

"With our understanding of the word 'death' there

is inextricably bound the idea of some kind of destruction, a cessation of life; how could I think that I died when I did not lose self-consciousness for one moment, when I felt myself just as alive, hearing all, seeing all, conscious of all, capable of movement, thought, speech? . . .

"The dissociation from everything around me, the split in my personality more than anything could have made me understand that which had taken place, if I should have believed in the existence of a soul, if I were religious; but this was not the case and I was guided solely by that which I felt, and the sensation of life was so clear that I was only perplexed with the strange phenomenon, being completely unable to link my feelings with the traditional conception of death, that is to say, while sensing and being conscious of myself, to think that I do not exist. . .

"Afterwards, in recalling and thinking over my state of being at the time, I noticed only that my mental capacities functioned with striking energy and swiftness" (pp. 16-21).

The state of the soul in the first minutes after death is not described in such detail in the Christian literature of antiquity; there the whole emphasis is always on the much more striking experiences that come later. It is probably only in modern times, when the identification of "life" with "life in the body" has become so complete and persuasive, that we should expect to see such attention paid to those first few minutes when the expectations of most modern men are turned so thoroughly upside down, with the realization: death is not the end, life continues, a whole new state opens up for the soul!

There is certainly nothing in this experience that contradicts the Orthodox teaching on the state of the soul immediately after death. Some, in criticizing this experience, have raised doubts that a person is actually dead if he is revived in a few minutes; but this is only a technical question (which we will comment on in due time). The fact remains that in these few minutes (sometimes in the minutes before death also) there are often experiences that cannot be explained as mere "hallucinations." Our task here is to discover how we are to understand these experiences.

2. THE MEETING WITH OTHERS

The soul remains in its initial state of solitude after death for a very short time. Dr. Moody quotes several cases of people who, even before dying, suddenly saw already-dead relatives and friends.

"The doctor gave me up, and told my relatives that I was dying . . . I realized that all these people were there, almost in multitudes it seems, hovering around the ceiling of the room. They were all people I had known in my past life, but who had passed on before. I recognized my grandmother and a girl I had known when I was in school, and many other relatives and friends . . . It was a very happy occasion, and I felt that they had come to protect or to guide me" (p. 44).

This experience of meeting deceased friends and relatives at death is by no means a new discovery, even among modern scientists. Over fifty years ago it was made the subject of a small book by a pioneer in modern "parapsychology" or psychical research, Sir William Barrett *(Death-Bed Visions,* Methuen, London, 1926). After the appearance of Dr. Moody's first book, a much more detailed account of this experience, inspired by Sir William's book, was published, and it turned out that the two authors of this book had been doing systematic research on the experiences of the dying for many years. Here we should say a word about the findings of this new book (Karlis Osis and Erlendur Haraldsson, *At the Hour of Death,* Avon Books, New York, 1977).

This book is the first thoroughly "scientific" one to appear on the experiences of the dying. It is based on the results of detailed questionaires and interviews with a randomly-selected group of doctors and nurses in the eastern United States and northern India (the latter country being chosen for maximum objectivity, so as to test the differences in experience that might arise from the difference in nationality, psychology, and religion). The material thus obtained includes over a thousand cases of apparitions and visions occurring to the dying (and to a few who returned after being clinically dead). The authors find that in general Dr. Moody's findings are in harmony with theirs (p. 24). They find that apparitions

of dead relatives and friends (and, in India, many apparitions of Hindu "gods") occur to the dying, often within an hour and usually within a day before death. In about half as many cases there is a vision of some other-worldly, "heaven"-like environment, which produces the same feelings (this "heaven" experience will be discussed below). This study is of special value in that it carefully distinguishes rambling, this-worldly hallucinations from clearly-seen other-worldly apparitions and visions, and statistically analyzes the presence of factors such as use of hallucinogenic drugs, high temperatures, and diseases and impairment of the brain, all of which could produce mere hallucinations rather than actual experiences of something outside the patient's own mind. Very significantly, the authors find that the most coherent and clearly other-worldly experiences occur to the patients who are the most in contact with this-worldly reality and least likely to hallucinate; in particular, those who see apparitions of the dead or spiritual beings are usually in full possession of their mental faculties and see these beings with full awareness of their hospital surroundings. Further, they find that those who hallucinate usually see *living* persons, whereas the genuine apparitions of the dying seem rather to be of *dead* persons. The authors, while cautious in their conclusions, find themselves inclined to "acceptance of the after-life hypothesis as the most tenable explanation of our data" (p. 194). This book thus complements the findings of Dr. Moody, and impressively confirms the experience of meeting with the dead and with spiritual beings at the time of death. Whether these beings are actually those whom the dying take them to be is a question that will be discussed below.

Such findings, of course, are somewhat startling when they come from the background of agnosticism and unbelief that has so long characterized the assumptions of modern science. For an Orthodox Christian, on the other hand, there is nothing surprising in them; we know death to be only a transition to another form of existence, and are familiar with many apparitions and visions which occur to the dying, both saints and ordinary sinners. St. Gregory the Great, in describing many of these experiences in his *Dialogues,* explains this

phenomenon of meeting others: "It frequently happens that a soul on the point of death recognizes those with whom it is to share the same eternal dwelling for equal blame or reward" (*Dialogues,* IV, 36). And specifically with regard to those who have led a righteous life, St. Gregory notes that "it often happens that the saints of heaven appear to the righteous at the hour of death in order to reassure them. And, with the vision of the heavenly company before their minds, they die without experiencing any fear or agony" (*Dialogues,* IV, 12). He gives examples when angels, martyrs, the Apostle Peter, the Mother of God, and Christ Himself have appeared to the dying (IV, 13-18).

Dr. Moody gives one example of a dying person's encounter, not with any relative or spiritual being, but with a total stranger: "One woman told of seeing during her out-of-body experience not only her own transparent spiritual body but also another one, that of another person who had died very recently. She did not know who this person was" (*Life After Life,* p. 45). St. Gregory describes a similar phenomenon in the *Dialogues:* he relates several incidents when a dying man calls out the name of someone who is dying at the same time in another place. And this is not at all a matter of clairvoyance experienced only by saints, for St. Gregory describes how one ordinary sinner, apparently destined for hell, sends for a certain Stephen, who unknown to him is to die at the same time, to tell him that "our ship is ready to take us to Sicily" (Sicily being a place of much volcanic activity, reminiscent of hell) (*Dialogues,* IV, 36). Evidently this is a matter of what is now called "extra-sensory perception" (ESP), which becomes particularly acute in many just before death, and of course continues after death when the soul is outside the realm of the physical senses entirely.

Thus, this particular "discovery" of modern psychical research only confirms what the reader of ancient Christian literature already knows concerning encounters at the time of death. These encounters, while they do not seem by any means to occur to everyone before death, still can be called universal in the sense that they occur without regard to nationality, religion, or holiness of life.

The experience of a Christian saint, on the other hand, while sharing the general characteristics which seemingly anyone can experience, has about it another dimension entirely — one that is not subject to definition by psychic researchers. In this experience special signs of God's favor often are manifest, and the vision from the other world is often visible to all or many who are near, not just to the dying person. Let us quote just one such example, from the same *Dialogues* of St. Gregory.

"While they stood around Romula's bed at midnight, a light suddenly shone down from heaven, flooding the entire room. Its splendor and brilliance struck fear and dread into their hearts . . . Then they heard the sound of an immense throng. The door of the room was thrown wide open, as if a great number of persons were pushing their way in. Those who stood round the bed had the impression that the room was being crowded with people, but because of their excessive fear and the extreme brightness they were unable to see. Fear paralyzed them and the brilliant light dazzled their eyes. Just then a delightful odor filled the air and with its fragrance calmed their souls which were still terrified by the sudden light . . . Looking at her spiritual mother Redempta, she said in a pleasant voice, 'Do not fear, mother, I shall not die yet.' " For three days the fragrance remained, and on "the fourth night Romula again called her mistress and asked to receive Holy Communion. Scarcely had Redempta and her other disciple left the bedside when they saw two choirs of singers standing in the square in front of the convent . . . The soul of Romula was set free from the body to be conducted directly to heaven. And as the choirs escorted her soul, rising higher and higher, the sound of their singing gradually diminished until finally the music of the psalms and the sweetness of the odor vanished altogether" *(Dialogues,* IV, 17). Orthodox Christians will remember similar incidents in the lives of many saints (St. Sisoes, St. Thais, Blessed Theophilus of Kiev, etc.)

As we advance further in this study of the experiences of dying and death we should keep well in mind the great differences that exist between the *general* experience of dying which is now arousing so much interest, and the grace-given

experience of death which occurs to righteous Orthodox Christians. This will help us the better to understand some of the puzzling aspects of the death experiences that are now occurring and are being described.

An awareness of this distinction, for example, can help us to identify the apparitions which the dying see. Do relatives and friends actually come from the realm of the dead in order to appear to the dying? And are these apparitions themselves different from the appearances of saints to righteous Christians at their death?

To answer the first of these questions, let us remember that Drs. Osis and Haraldsson report that many dying Hindus see the "gods" of their Hindu Panteon (Krishna, Shiva, Kali, etc.) rather than those close relatives and friends commonly reported in America. Yet, as St. Paul so clearly teaches, these "gods" are nothing in reality (I Cor. 8:4-5); any *real* experience of "gods" involves demons (I Cor. 10:20). Who, then, do these dying Hindus actually see? Drs. Osis and Haraldsson believe that the *identification* of the beings who are encountered is largely the product of subjective interpretation based on religious, cultural and personal background; and this seems indeed a reasonable judgment that will fit most cases. In the American cases also, it must be that the dead relatives who are seen are not actually "present" as the dying believe them to be. St. Gregory the Great says only that the dying man "recognizes" people, whereas to the righteous "the saints of heaven *appear*" — a distinction which not merely indicates the different experience of the righteous and ordinary sinners when they die, but also is directly bound up with the different afterlife state of the saints and ordinary sinners. The saints have great freedom to intercede for the living and to come to their aid, whereas deceased sinners, save in very special cases, have no contact with the living.

This distinction is set forth quite clearly by Blessed Augustine, the 5th-century Latin Father, in the treatise which he wrote at the request of St. Paulinus of Nola concerning the "care of the dead," where he tries to reconcile the undoubted fact that saints such as the Martyr Felix of Nola have clearly appeared to believers, with the equally undoubted fact

that the dead as a general rule do *not* appear to the living.

After giving the Orthodox teaching, based on Holy Scripture, that "the souls of the dead are in a place where they do not see the things which go on and transpire in this mortal life" (ch. 13), and his opinion that cases of the seeming manifestations of the dead to the living are usually either through "the workings of angels" or are "false visions" through the working of devils who have in mind such purposes as leading men into a false teaching of the afterlife (ch. 10), Blessed Augustine proceeds to distinguish between the *seeming* manifestations of the dead, and the *true* manifestations of saints:

"How do the martyrs by their very benefactions, which are given to those who seek, indicate that they are interested in human affairs, if the dead do not know what the living are doing? For, not alone by the operations of his benefactions, but even to the very eyes of men, did Felix the Confessor appear, when Nola was being besieged by the barbarians. You (Bishop Paulinus) take pious delight in this appearance of his. We heard of this not by uncertain rumors, but from trustworthy witnesses. In truth, things are divinely shown which are different from the usual order nature has given to the separate kinds of created things. Just because our Lord, when He wished, suddenly turned water into wine is no excuse for us not to understand the proper value of water as water. This is a rare, in fact, an isolated instance of such divine operation. Again, the fact that Lazarus rose from the dead does not mean that every dead person rises when he wishes, or that a lifeless person is called back by a living one just as a sleeping person is aroused by one who is awake. Some events are characteristic of human action; others manifest the signs of divine power. Some things happen naturally; others are done in a miraculous manner, although God is present in the natural process, and nature accompanies the miraculous. One must not think, then, that any of the dead can intervene in the affairs of the living merely because the martyrs are present for the healing or the aiding of certain ones. Rather, one should think this: The martyrs through divine power take part in the affairs of the living, but the dead of themselves have no power to intervene in the affairs of the living" ("Care

for the Dead," ch. 16, in Saint Augustine, *Treatises on Marriage and Other Subjects,* The Fathers of the Church, vol. 27, New York, 1955, p. 378).

Indeed, to take one example, Holy Fathers of recent times, such as Elder Ambrose of Optina, teach that the beings contacted at spiritistic seances are demons rather than the spirits of the dead; and those who have thoroughly investigated the phenomena of spiritism, if they have any Christian standard of judgment at all, have come to the same conclusion (see, for example, Simon A. Blackmore, S. J., *Spiritism: Facts and Frauds,* Benziger Bros., New York, 1924).

Thus, we need not doubt that the saints actually appear to the righteous at death, as is described in many Lives of Saints. To ordinary sinners, on the other hand, there are often apparitions of relatives, friends, or "gods" which correspond to what the dying either expect or are prepared to see. The exact nature of these latter apparitions it is probably impossible to define; they are certainly not mere hallucinations, but seem to be a part of the natural experience of death, a sign to the dying person (as it were) that he is about to enter a new realm where the laws of ordinary material reality no longer hold. There is nothing very extraordinary about this experience, which seems to hold constant for different times, places, and religions.

The experience of "meeting with others" commonly occurs just before death, and is not to be confused with the rather different meeting we will now describe: that with the "being of light."

To be continued.